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Written statement* submitted by the Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Bahrain: Abuse of Medical Neutrality

It has been 4 years since the Bahraini people went out and demonstrated peacefully at the pearl roundabout in the center of Bahrain capital Manama. The Bahrain revolution is considered among the most peaceful in the Arab spring although it has been brutally combated by the Bahrain authority.

The shooting and killing of the peaceful demonstrators have raised the level of conscience of the medical personnel in the country.

The black Thursday 17/02/2011 alerted all medical staff at Salmaniya Medical Complex, which is the biggest hospital in Bahrain who unanimously tried to maximize their efforts to save lives of the injured casualties and offer prompt medical treatment to everybody.

Unfortunately, the medics were harshly treated by the security forces who prevented the ambulances from reaching the pearl roundabout and brutally beat the paramedics in the ambulances.

This is the beginning of breach of medical neutrality, which was further auscultated by the arrest and torture of medics. Over 60 medics were arrested and tortured and more than 200 medics were dismissed from their jobs at that time. The international community voiced out against this weird action taken by the Bahraini government. However, the authority continued to pursue with the case legally by fabricating false charges and issuing ridiculously harsh sentences.

Constant international pressure yielded reduced sentences but 6 medics were jailed.

Currently, there are 4 medics in custody with varying sentences from 3-15 years. Among them is the first Bahraini orthopedic surgeon Dr Ali Al Ekri who has been sentenced 5 years because of treating injured protesters. Needless to say that all government hospitals in Bahrain have been militarized and hard to reach by those who gets injured during clashes with state security forces on daily basis. This is as a result of fear of being arrested. Several injured protesters were arrested directly from the hospital without even completing the necessary treatment. The hospital administrators have instructed the medical staff to report any patient with an suspicious injury that might be due to clashes with security forces.

Therefore, satellite primitive primary care set ups have been created all over the country in order to offer primary treatment. Several people were arrested because of their connections with these satellite clinics. Serious injuries unfortunately sometimes referred late to the hospital and catastrophic consequences may occur.

Also, the jailed protesters are usually handcuffed to the bed with the help of medical staff. This is ethically unacceptable and breach medical neutrality.

I would like to point out that the security forces trying their best to harm the peaceful protesters by direct shooting at their face or their chest in order to create the maximum damage. This has been documented by videos and photos. There are many medics who were jailed or dismissed from their jobs haven't been reinstated although they have completed their sentences.

We would like to see an intensive pressure on the government to release detained physicians and medics